



# VAMC Anchor

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## ***Take Care of My Veterans!***

*Grandfather's last words still inspire PVAMC employee*

by Erinn Raimondi, OTR/L

Emil--or "Grandpa Mil," as I call him--was a World War II Veteran taken POW in Germany and who suffered for years with PTSD before finding comfort at the Northampton VA. When I first joined the VA in 2004, he was incredibly happy. This created a bond between Emil and I that continue to this day; he became my daily inspiration.

Grandpa Mil always had an encouraging word, a gentle reminder of why we are all here at the VA. He made a bad day fresh again by simply saying "Erinn, Veterans aren't all nice like me you know! I am sure you treated them with the same respect and dignity you would treat me with, and for that I thank you." The next three years were spent swapping stories about Providence and Northampton. He would email me frequently and ask "How are my Veterans doing?" He became increasingly active in the DAV, and he and his wife, Rita, volunteered many hours at the Soldiers' Home in Northampton.

By October 2005, Grandpa Mil's emails became less frequent, but always remained a joy. Each email contained words of wisdom that were needed to get through the day. He would always end them with "thank you for taking care of my Veterans." In October 2006, we spent our final outing together touring the Northampton VA. He was so proud to be showing off "His VA" and would proudly boast to the staff that knew him well: "This is my granddaughter, and she works at the Providence VA."

In January 2007, Grandpa Mil left me with words that will forever ring in my ears. As he sat in the chair at his bedside, his bones being eaten by metastatic cancer, his lungs making it harder and harder for him to breathe let alone speak, he whispered the last words to me, "take care of my Veterans." Days later, laying quietly in bed at the nursing home, he commented to my father-in-law, "look at Old Glory" as he watched the large flag waving in the winter breeze. Days later, he passed away, and my heart broke. Every now and then I come across a Veteran from the same Infantry Division as Grandpa Mil, and for that brief encounter, it is as if he is with me again. On days when I am faced with an ornery Veteran and am ready to scream, I hear his words echo in my ear, "Take care of my Veteran's," and I can't help but smile. *(continued on page 3)*



## **May 2010**

Russell Rea (A&MM)  
Gregg Anderson (Facilities Mgmt)  
Linda Jackson (MHBSS)  
Armin Azar (MHBSS)  
Renee Cabral (Nursing)  
Terry Traibman (Nursing)  
Danielle Cormier (Nursing)  
Joanne Lapp (Nursing)  
Kelly Gunn (Nursing)  
Jennifer Sloan (Nursing)  
Keerthi Madala (Office of Director)  
Jackie Ferris (Pathology & Lab)  
Jonathan Kalnicki (Police Services)  
John Bas (Primary Care)  
Bruce Thomas (Research)

## **Biomedical Engineers** ***Our Commitment to Excellence***

by Gil Pina



Clockwise from bottom left:  
Andrew Mastalerz,  
James Souza, Gil Pina, Jesus Montalvo, and Carl Bechet

**There's never a dull moment when you're a Clinical Engineer. From researching needs and capabilities, to installing, inspecting, and repairing medical devices and complex medical systems, to advising and training users—we like to think we do it all. Here at PVAMC, we manage and maintain over \$22 million dollars worth of technology. I'd like to share with you some of the fruits of our efforts over the past year or so:** *(continued on page 2)*



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## Director's Spotlight

### *Providence VAMC Housekeepers Receive Bunker Hill Awards*

As you may have seen on our new intranet homepage last week, several members of our Housekeeping Staff—Wayne Johnson, Adonnis Brown, Karl Mann, Vester Gross, Robert Dunston, John (Joe) Balko, Ron Parady, Tom Finnegan, Mark Tortolani, and Bob Fitzpatrick—received the Bunker Hill Award in recognition of their stellar efforts in support of Army Corps of Engineers-administered construction projects here at the Providence VA Medical Center. Colonel Tom Feir, Commander, New England District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presented the awards on May 27.

The Army Corps of Engineers is currently administering about \$60 million worth of construction projects here at our facility, based on a memorandum of agreement between the VA and the U.S. Army. Some of the more noticeable projects on-going include the renovation of 1A to upgrade outpatient pharmacy and the façade repairs. There are certainly many others. We are one of the first few VA facilities to take advantage of this collaborative opportunity.

The Army Corps of Engineers traces its beginnings to the opening days of the Revolutionary War when Boston native, Colonel Richard Gridley, was named chief engineer of the Massachusetts Volunteers and, shortly thereafter, chief engineer of the newly-formed Continental Army by General George Washington. The first Army engineering action occurred on the night of June 16, 1775, when Gridley designed and supervised the construction of an earthwork on Breed's Hill overlooking Boston harbor that would prove impregnable against British bombardment during a fierce battle the following day. The Battle of Bunker Hill (as it was later called) marked the beginning of the long tradition of service to New England that the Corps continues today.

Just like the Battle of Bunker Hill marked the beginning of the long tradition of service to New England, our Bunker Hill Award recipients mark a long tradition of service, professionalism, and excellence here at the Providence VA Medical Center.

**WILLIAM BURNEY**  
Acting Medical Center Director



*Bunker Hill Award recipients from left are Wayne Johnson, Bob Fitzpatrick, Karl Mann, Robert Dunston, Vester Gross, Joe Balko, Adonnis Brown, and Roger Tortolani. Not pictured are recipients Tom Finnegan and Ron Parady.*

## "Biomedical Engineers" (con't)

- ✓ Installation of the 3T Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Unit--the only hospital-based MRI unit of its kind in Rhode Island;
- ✓ Installation of three Audiology Booths (two at New Bedford, and one at Eagle Square) to improve access and reduce audiology fee-basis care;
- ✓ Installation of the Lab TUG robotics system ("Wilma and Betty") to carry lab specimens;
- ✓ Installation of a Lab Automation system, to improve work flow efficiency and patient care;
- ✓ Replacement of all Vital Sign monitors to standardize technology and have compatible results across clinical areas; and
- ✓ Installation of a digital X-ray room, to improve throughput in DIS, which enhances efficiency on diagnosing and treating patients.

Clinical Engineering is committed to providing excellent equipment management and support system to this Medical Center, and--more importantly--to delivering the best patient care possible to our Veterans.

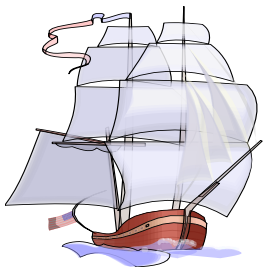


## *Service Spirit*

23rd Annual Employee  
Recognition Picnic  
Thursday, July 15, 2010  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



*Stay tuned for details...*



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## SCC Nephrology/Renal

### Specialty Clinic Corner

**1. Overview:** Nephrology concerns the diagnosis and treatment of kidney diseases, including electrolyte disturbances and hypertension; as well as the care of those requiring renal replacement therapy, including dialysis and renal transplant patients.

The Nephrology Department provides our Veterans with diagnosis and management of a variety of conditions including acute kidney injury (a sudden loss of kidney function); chronic kidney disease (a progressive decline in kidney function); glomerular diseases (inflammatory conditions which affect the filtering process); recurrent kidney stones; chronic or recurrent urinary tract infections; hypertension; and fluid, electrolyte disorders or acid/base disorders. We also care for patients on dialysis and following kidney transplantation.

The Nephrology Department currently has 2 attending physicians, 1 nurse practitioner, one nephrology fellow (trainee) and the support staff in B Clinic.

**2. Treatment Services:** Treatment services include the initial consultation to initiate the ordering of appropriate diagnostic tests to determine the disease process manifested by the patient. Laboratory testing is often used and is frequently the key test in suggesting a diagnosis. If necessary, more specialized tests may be ordered such as 24-hour urines, renal biopsy, ultrasound scanning of the urinary tract, MRI, etc. The analysis of testing results and the prescribing of the correct treatment modality, which may treat the underlying condition, slow the progression of kidney function loss, or alleviate related symptoms.

**3. Workload:** The Nephrology Clinic sees patients 3 days per week. There were 722 visits in FY 2009.

**4. Did you know?** Nephrologists are trained in the management of kidney diseases not requiring surgery. Their specialty is a subspecialty of internal medicine. These physicians must complete a three-year residency in internal medicine followed by two-year (or longer) fellowship training in nephrology.

*Prepared by Jackie Horner, RN, MA, BC; Reviewed/Edited by Andrew J. Cohen, MD*

### "Take Care"

(continued from page 1)

Recently, I was struggling through a difficult Monday and decided to clean out my word documents on the shared drive; curious, I opened an unnamed .PDF file. It was Grandpa Mil's memoirs from the war, POW time, and return home! He had sent this to me shortly after I started at the VA to give me some insight into what Veterans have experienced. It serves as a reminder that our Veterans continue fighting a battle inside, be it medical, mental or emotional. That battle wages for years after the war is over. Certainly, as Grandpa Mil pointed out, not every Veteran will be nice, but they all are due the same respect, compassion, and attention. That is why I'm here...that is why we are here.

*(Erinn Raimondi is an Occupational Therapist here at the Providence VA Medical Center; please [click](#) to see Grandpa Mil's official Ex-POW bio)*



### The Case of the Stunned Nephew

Due to the large number of correct submissions, winners of May's **Intrepid Detective** were selected via a drawing. This month's winners are: Mitch Little, Justin Silvia, Denise Frappollo, Susan Johnson, Linda Thompson, Elaine Taylor, Judith Maddalena, Mike McCoy, Michele Peloquin, and Debra Cohen. Each will receive 2 free movie passes.





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## Staff in the News



From left: Surgical Service's **Monica Kaitz**, **Dr. Fred Burgess**, **Susan Guadalupe**, **Patrick Lenehan**, **John Lyman**, **Cristie Hernandez**, **Sue Ryan**, and **Nancy Crandall** with **Dr. Louis Vito** (center) during Vito's retirement tea.



### ...Around the PVAMC...

**Top:** **Veteran David Brodeur** and **Diane Gerardi (VA Nursing Academy)** assess Simulation Man "Ebenezer Wheezer," during a Stroke Awareness event; **Employee/Veteran Kathleen Meuneiri (Peer Vet Coach)** educates employees and Veterans during Mental Health Awareness Month; **Middle:** **Clarisse DiCandia, Psy.D., Clinical Psychologist, Warwick Vet Center**, speaks during the Memorial Day Observance; **Medical Center Director Vincent Ng** and **Dawna Blake, MD, Associate Chief, Primary Care**, received the VA Health Care Award at the Veterans of Foreign Wars 91<sup>st</sup> State Convention; **Bottom:** **Cranston Mayor Allan Fung** receives a **Certificate of Appreciation** from **Bill Burney, Minerva Thomas**, and **Marlene Callahan**, during last month's Asian-Pacific Islander Heritage Celebration; the **Nutrition and Food Service** displays a Memorial Day dinner for inpatients.



### Got Story Ideas?

Please submit your ideas to  
[Thomas.Antonaccio@va.gov](mailto:Thomas.Antonaccio@va.gov).

### Director's Blog



### Need Enrollment Info?

Please call (401) 273-7100, ext. 3300